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THE COLLECTOR AND ART CRITIC.

BUYING NAMES

A few weeks ago, an illustrator offering his services to a publisher, was politely dismissed with the phrase: "I like your work, but we are buying names." This is also the attitude of not a few collectors.

Very likely they possess the characteristics of the true collector: the joy of acquiring and the satisfaction of possession; but, because they have also the ordinary commercial instinct, or, as is often the case, because they cannot afford to tie up their money except with the prospect of realizing at a profit, they buy for a rise. Hence the apparently prudent course is to buy the works of well-considered names; those which have been already endorsed by the verdict of the auction-room, and will command, it is to be hoped, a continuance and an increase of favor.

Unfortunately, the endorsement of the auction-room is a fickle one, and the favorites of ten years ago are very apt to be negligible quantities to-day; or, if the vogue continues, it is increasingly difficult to buy at a price which will secure a reasonable profit. Happy is the man who can sense ahead the coming reputation of an artist! That very few succeed in doing so is a reflection on the courage and intelligence of the majority of collectors.

It needs neither the one nor the other, to buy, for example, Inness's, Wyant's, and Homer Martin's; only the requisite amount of vulgar coin. And there are many other names, to allude only to American art, the buying of which demands very little sagacity on the part of the collector. He would admit, no doubt, as a general truth, that there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, but he doesn't know enough, or is too timid to go a-fishing, and will never make a big haul. He cannot read the signs of the times, until they are advertised from every housetop.

Yet there are one or two points quite patent to students of nineteenth century art. One is that the Barbizon artists are already old masters. Their best works will be a possession of paramount interest to the world, though they fall short in certain particulars of the attainment of their successors, while their less important pictures are conspicuously inferior to those of the many later artists. Neither Corot nor Rousseau was the whole thing; they represent only a fragment of the infinite possibilities of painting. A second point is, that out of the hurly-burly of motives and methods,—methods recovered from the past and originated newly,—no body of painters has, on the whole, reached such a sane and distinguished amalgam as the American. Our own painters paint as well as the Frenchmen, which is to say that they paint as well as any painters in the world to-day. It is true, their work—and this reveals itself particularly in figure subjects—has not the style of the French work; it does not bear the impress of tradition, of that long-established tactfulness of taste, limited in scope, perhaps, but thoroughly accomplished in craftsmanship and discreet in motive, which characterizes the gallery artist. Much American work is feebly imitative; but, on the other hand, still more is independent. This brings us to a third point: that American art, which, broadly speaking, has been spending a good many years in learning how to paint, has recently begun to show some very clear indications of having something individual to say. It is in this direction that Americans are going shortly to surpass the French—their teachers; a result only natural, for they have larger conditions behind them, more incentives to originality, and they are beginning to realize it. The men I have in mind are still among the younger generation of our painters, whose names, at present not of much weight, will count heavily later on.

Those are the kind of men that the collector, even if he has no higher motive than buying names, would find it profitable to study.

CHARLES H. CAFFIN.

AN "IMPRESSION."

"Better a clumsy hand with sincerity, than the accuracy of mediocrity."

Every people has the art it deserves, and, until to-day, a perverse Fate has presided over art in America where the unromantic and precisely Real has been the most sought-after outcome of the painter's brush. Yet is our literature most delightfully romantic. American readers,—this means all of us, from sea to sea,—are strongly swayed by the charms of tales picturesque, unreal, delightfully exaggerated, unconventional and permeated with the "light that never was on sea or land."

Strange that a people giving their literary artists such latitude should curb their painters with custom and conventions. For fight as we will against the intruding thought, it ever remains true that the people determine the art of a country quite as they fix its law and literature.

And will these people eternally judge the pictures they see by those they have seen? Who, in his studio, has escaped that complacent compliment from his friend, the enemy: "Now this is good, for I have seen things just like it myself." For him this is the last word in art, and truly

"Yesterday This Day's Madness did prepare."

Hating insincerity and careless untruth, there suddenly appeared, not so very long ago, the encyclopædic Pre-Raphaelites, genuine reformers, who made possible the student-poet-artist of our day. And from these two springs the full flower of the artistic age, the impressionist, knowing all that his forebears know, but better, knowing how to hide the evidences of that knowledge, giving us the results of logic with the logic left out.

So whimsically did grand old Turner predict it:—a young girl leans over his shoulder watching his canvas,—and the sky. "I cannot see the colors in the clouds that you are putting in your picture, Mr. Turner." "No, my dear, but don't you wish you could?"

The receptive and observant artist-mind is like a sensitive photographic plate,—had this a soul. Some plates are "fast," some are "slow;" and the impressions one artist puts on a canvas are from the briefest and most concentrated glances, while another's are from painstaking, almost mechanical observations. This painter, however, while consciously and deliberately struggling to imitate nature, cannot have much, if any, passionate feeling and cannot give expression to a lively sentiment. He must, perforce, be placidly commonplace.

Both artists are impressionists,—why quibble about a matter of terminology,—and each has his personal equation. But here the likeness ends. The multitudes flock to these commonplaces, appreciate and encourage the artist (this means they buy his works); and never have to put forth a whit of energy or thought, gaze they ever so long at a canvas. The newly-rich collector buys what his not-so-newly-rich friends have on their walls, and thus is forged another link in the leaden chain of mediocrity. A man may read and he can hide away his books; but his pictures stand in the face of all men a key and index to his very self.

What fearful odds for an impressionist,—subtle, refined and nervous,—to cope with!

So few artists have enough synthetic energy of concentration with allied power of memory and reproduction to record one of those brief moods of nature when she is taken unaware, that when one of them does succeed in crystallizing on a canvas his impression, where is his audience to be found? Among those who love elaborate story-telling pictures, or the edible still-life, or the landscape-gardener's colored plans?

Alas! the majority seem to be bewildered and disturbed in the face of such a trenchant epigram of the brush as our intense impressionist gives, and are quite content to relegate it, with regal William, to the realm of "gutter art." Those who

look at everything, yet see nothing, are bound to be perturbed in the presence of nervous ferocity, such as a hundred years ago Goya possessed, and it becomes a huge task to make them believe that while painting is personally expressive, it is something vastly more than pictorial.

When art bewilders the multitude the cry is "Bad art!" But why not a like slogan when politics, science or theology is in a fog? So many are baffled by impressionistic painting because they are uneducated as far as alertness of observation goes, or because thinking makes them tired. Some day, when they can see nature in free inadvertence, when they can look with kindly scorn on the finesse of execution, and when they learn to accept with reverence the definitive statement of the artist as they do now the dictum of a doctor,—then modern intelligence will go hand in hand with modern impressionism.

Perish all thought of a School of Impressionists! There is, as Whistler said, no school or art of any sort. And then he asked: "Is an artist an *aérolite*?" Gradually must that atrophy of individuality that creeps in with piecemeal observation and the scrupulous collection of *disjecta membra*, yield to modern art education. Recruits are learning that outside of traditions, studios and lectures, there are "sermons in stones and books in the running brooks." A few misguided and obtuse minds still think rudimentary work is synonymous with simplicity, bad drawing with freedom and unseemly haste with intensity; but the elect are well assured that a great artist will see things truly, feel them justly and do them simply.

What keen joy to feel that all art is impressionism, all artists impressionists. It reminds us of that great scene in "*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*" where M. Jourdain exclaims to his philosophical teacher: "Have I been talking prose all these forty years and not known it until now?"

LEIGH HUNT.

THE SELECTION OF SIR C. PURDON CLARKE.

The new Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art augurs great possibilities for the future of this institution, which has become more national than metropolitan in its scope and influence. It indicates the present policy of the Museum management to widen its old-time conservatism to a broader and more liberal view. Sir Purdon is a man of eminently practical qualification, of remarkable organizing ability and endowed with great administrative capacity.

While some Americans have been suggested for this important post, it must be remembered that the old saying: "Art knows no country," applies here. Unqualifiedly the best man has been chosen. His work as Director of the South Kensington Museum in London demonstrates this assertion. I do not believe there is a single man in America who could fill the bill so well as will Sir Purdon Clarke. Without question he is the ablest available man in the world for the position, and under his direction the Museum will surely become the great educational institution it was designed to be. The Directors are to be congratulated on the wisdom of their choice.

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A propos des bottes, what has all this caterwauling been about the Museum collections? We have heard some horrible Saturday night screechings and hysterical clamor to turn the Museum upside down—as if the first self-styled expert that comes along should have the last word to say in the attributions of our Museum pictures. Questions of attribution are constantly opened and re-opened here and abroad. The Metropolitan does not stand alone in these attacks, which are often leveled at paintings in the Louvre, Berlin, Vienna, London and everywhere, for that matter. Dr. Bode disagrees with Morelli, Berenson assails Vassari, and so the merry dance goes on.

More about this some future time.

THE COLOR SUPPLEMENT

"A frail sheet of paper sometimes proves far more durable than paintings on canvas," observed a well-known print collector the other day.

Without digressing on the paradoxical side of this statement I may add that the artistic reproduction of a painting on canvas widens the enjoyment of the original painting by bringing its beauty into the homes of thousands.

A process of but recent origin has enlarged the possibilities of this extended enjoyment. The so-called three-color process as introduced by the Osborne Company is by far the best method for a faithful counterfeit or facsimile of the original. It is taking the place of lithography to the extent that the most conservative magazines, like the *Century*, have adopted this process for full-color illustrations.

As may be seen in the color supplement which accompanies this number the reproduction is one which charms by its tonality, by the richness of its textures, the play of light and shade, the relief of the modelling. It is suggestive in somewhat the sense that etching is suggestive, but is more fairly comparable to mezzotint with its velvety darks and soft sub-tones, grading subtly into the high lights of the composition. It is impossible to give a description of the process, which really is color-photography, for there are mechanical details connected with the printing which are part of the secret of the process. The original painting, however, is put before the camera and by the interposition of a screen a plate is made which retains the negative of every shade or tone with yellow in it. Then a second plate is made which cuts out all but the red; a third leaves only the blue on the sensitized film. These plates are transferred on copper and the color printing takes place. It is noticed that only the three primary colors are used, the combination of which reproduces the tones and shades of the painting faithfully.

The Osborne Company has gone, however, a step beyond the commercial side of furnishing reproductions. It has hit on a scheme which secures to them original work for reproduction, which is of high artistic merit. To secure subjects of merit the Company held in 1903 an artist's competition, to which hundreds of artists sent canvases. Again a second competition was held in October of last year. On these occasions \$2,000 was awarded in prizes for the five best paintings selected by a competent jury. An additional prize of \$1,000 was offered for the best calendar subject chosen by a popular vote, while many other meritorious canvases were purchased. As a result the Osborne Art Calendars contain pictures of distinct merit, admirably reproduced. The calendars, thereby, are not trivial or characterless, but have character and dignity and make a favorable impression. An office is beautified by these artistic prints.

Walter C. Hartson, the painter who produced the canvas whereof the color supplement is a facsimile, has forged to himself a place among the best of our American artists. He paints with a free and decided brush, and is especially attracted to the atmospheric effects of the moist lowlands, or the subtle delicate softness of tints, which makes the Dutch landscape so attractive. He possesses individuality and distinction, and is thoroughly in sympathy with the charms of his subjects. His merit has been recognized by many medallic honors, while the award of the \$500 landscape prize in the Osborne competition conferred an enviable distinction upon him.

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In a letter from Winslow Homer the famous artist states: "I paint very few things. I have only painted two pictures in two years." It is interesting to hear this authoritative statement from the rock-bound coast of Maine, of which this most famous of our living American painters is a habitant, and it accounts for the scarcity of his work now in the market.